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PIONEER SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS OF LOS ANGELES.

BY J. M. GUINN.

[Read October 4, 1897.]

The annual reports of the successive Boards of Education of Los Angeles city for the past twelve years have carried forward in each yearly issue a list of the "persons who have been Superintendents of the Los Angeles city schools." These lists uniformly give Dr. W. T. Lucky, appointed in 1873, as the first Superintendent. There is no statement in any published report that our schools had a supervising officer before Dr. Lucky.

I recently made an extended search through the city archives for data in regard to the early schools of our city and their supervision. I find from the archives that the office of Superintendent was created twenty years before Dr. Lucky's time, and that fourteen persons filled the office before 1873, the date of Dr. Lucky's appointment.

While Los Angeles was under Mexican domination the Ayuntamiento (municipal council,) employed and dismissed teachers and gave the schools all the supervision they received. After the American conquest, the Ayuntamiento was continued for a time as the governing power of the city; and it exercised its former functions in regard to the schools. In July, 1850, the Ayuntamiento was superseded by the Common Council. That body assumed control of the schools, but who examined teachers and supervised their work, the records do not show. Up to 1853 the schools were supported in part by subscription, the Council apportioning a certain amount of the municipal fund to each school for the educating of poor children.

The first ordinance establishing public schools in Los Angeles city was passed by the Common Council, July 26, 1853. This ordinance provided for the appointment by the Council of three Commissioners of Public Schools, "who shall serve as a City Board of Education. The chairman of said board shall be Superintendent of the Public Schools of the city." The board was empowered to examine and appoint teachers and to build school houses. At the next meeting of the Council, J. Lancaster Brent, Lewis Granger and Stephen C. Foster were appointed a Board of Education, J. Lancaster Brent,

by virtue of his position as chairman of the board, becoming Superintendent.

In May, 1854, Hon. Stephen C. Foster, on assuming the office of Mayor, in his inaugural address, said: "First in importance among the needs of our city is education. Our last census shows more than 500 children within the corporate limits of age to attend school, three-fourths of whom have no means of procuring an education other than that afforded by the public schools." He urged the organization of a Board of Education to manage the schools, the appointment of a Superintendent, and the building of two school houses conveniently located.

At the next meeting of the Council an ordinance was presented and passed, providing for the appointment by the City Council of three school trustees or commissioners, a superintendent and a school marshal.

At a meeting of the City Council, held May 20, 1854, Lewis Grainger, a member of the Council moved that Stephen C. Foster be appointed City Superintendent of Common Schools. Manuel Requena, Francis Mellus and W. T. B. Sanford, trustees, and G. W. Cole, school marshal. The appointments were confirmed. Thus the Mayor of the city became its first School Superintendent, and three of the seven members of the Council constituted its first Board of Education.

The duties of Superintendent, as defined in the ordinance, were "to examine all persons wishing to teach in the common schools within the city, to grant certificates of approbation to such as are well qualified morally and intellectually to teach, and to revoke certificates for cause; to visit the schools monthly, making such suggestions for the improvement and welfare of the schools as he may think proper, and to hold a public examination once a year." The school board and the superintendent set vigorously to work to secure the erection of a school building. Before the close of the school year, schoolhouse No. 1, located on the northwest corner of Spring and Second streets, on the lot now occupied by the Bryson Block and the old City Hall, was completed and occupied. It was a two-story brick building, and cost in the neighborhood of \$6000. It was well out in the suburbs then, the center of population at that time being in the neighborhood of the Plaza. To Stephen C. Foster belongs the credit of inaugurating the public school system of our city, and to him is due the honor of being its first School Superintendent. (J. Lancaster Brent was Superintendent ex-officio, only.)

From 1853 to 1866, the Common Council appointed the members of the Board of Education and the School Superintendents. The board in early times being a creation of the Council it would naturally be supposed that the relations between the two bodies would be harmonious. On the contrary, we find the relations were sometimes so strained that they snapped asunder.

In the minutes of the Council proceedings for July 7, 1856, appears this resolution: "Resolved, That page 7 of the School Commissioners' record be pasted down on page 8, so that the indecorous language written therein by the School Commissioners of 1855 can never again be read or seen, said language being couched in such terms that the present School Commissioners are not willing to use said record." What the provocation was that called forth such vigorous language from the members of the Board of Education does not appear. Doubtless the City Fathers deserved a verbal chastigation, but as they had their innings last, they vindicated their reputations by a liberal use of the paste-pot.

From 1866 to 1870, the School Boards and the Superintendents were elected by popular vote at the city election. In 1870, the office was discontinued. The city in school affairs at that time was governed by three trustees, the same as a county district. There was no authority in the school law for the election or appointment of a Superintendent. In 1872, a special act of the Legislature created a City Board of Education, consisting of five members, and gave it power to appoint a Superintendent. In 1889, the new charter created a board of nine members, one from each ward. The appointment of the Superintendent and assistant remains with the board.

The following is the list of persons who have filled the office of Superintendent since its creation, in 1854, down to the present time:

Stephen C. Foster	1854 to 1855
Dr. William B. Osburn	1855 to 1856
Dr. John S. Griffin	1856 to 1857
J. Lancaster Brent	1857 to 1858
E. J. C. Kewen	1858 to 1859
Rev. W. E. Boardman	1859 to 1862
A. F. Hinchman	1862 to 1863
Gustavus L. Mix	1863 to 1864
R. F. Hayes	1864 to 1865
Rev. Elias Birdsell	1865 to 1866
Joseph Huber, Sr.	1866 to 1867

H. D. Barrows	1867 to 1868
Andrew Glassell	1868 to 1869
Dr. T. H. Rose	1869 to 1870
No Superintendent	1870 to 1873
Dr. W. T. Lucky	1873 to 1876
C. H. Kimball	1876 to 1880
Mrs. C. B. Jones	1880 to 1881
J. M. Guinn	1881 to 1883
L. D. Smith	1883 to 1885
William M. Freisner	1885 to 1893
Leroy D. Brown	1893 to 1894
P. W. Search	1894 to 1895
J. A. Foshay	1895 to

The pioneer Superintendents were men of education and standing in the community. Many of them were prominent in civic affairs other than educational.

Stephen C. Foster,* the first Superintendent, still living at a ripe old age, is a graduate of Yale College. He has filled many city offices, as well as several county and State positions. He is the best authority extant on the history of our city and county. He has been identified with their growth and progress for more than half a century.

Dr. William B. Osburn, the second City Superintendent, was a man of versatile genius and varied attainments. He came to the Coast in 1847, as hospital steward of Col. Stevenson's regiment of New York volunteers. After the expiration of his term of service, he located in Los Angeles. He had a penchant for pioneering. He started the first drug store, opened the first auction house, established the first nursery and introduced the first ornamental trees and shrubbery into Los Angeles. He had a genius, too, for office-holding. He was collectively Postmaster, School Superintendent, Coroner and City Marshal. Whether it was his familiarity with letters, or his experience in a nursery that suggested to the Council his fitness for School Superintendent, the records do not show. The doctor was the hero of one of the famous rides of history, or rather he would be the hero had the ride ever gotten into history. A Mexican outlaw attempted to assassinate Judge Hays. The Sheriff, his deputy and Osburn followed the desperado across the river and out to the hills beyond Boyle Heights, to where there was an adobe house, the resort of outlaws. As the trio approached the house in the darkness they

were greeted with a volley from the guns of the desperadoes inside. The doctor, fearing that the next volley might create a vacancy in the offices of postmaster, school superintendent, coroner and marshal, and at the same time deprive the city of a political boss, a horticulturist and an auctioneer, turned his horse's head toward the city and fled. The deputy, seeing the doctor depart, followed after, and the sheriff, finding his forces falling back, dashed after to rally them.

The doctor, hearing the clatter of hoofs following supposed he was pursued by all the desperadoes in the lower country, and the deputy, hearing the hoof thuds of the sheriff's horse, thought they were after him, too, and spurred his horse on to overtake the doctor. Wilder and more furious became the race. The doctor plunged the rowels into his steed in a mad effort to distance his pursuers, the deputy, with whip and rein, urged his to greater speed and the mesa resounded with the clatter of flying hoofs. There was no bridge across the river in those days. The road led down to the ford through a narrow cut. The doctor in his wild haste missed the road and went over the bank into the sand and water of the river. The deputy, like Jill in the famous nursery rhyme, "came tumbling after," and the sheriff, unable to check the speed of his racer plunged into the mingled mass of man and horse.

The three worthies extricated themselves from their fallen steeds, and faced each other in the river bed; and then and there it was revealed to each who was the pursuer and who was the pursued. They stole quietly back to the city, but the story of the famous ride, like "murder will out."

Dr. John S. Griffin, third in succession to the office of City Superintendent of Schools, still lives in the city, a hale old man of 81 years. He came to the Coast as surgeon on Gen. Kearney's staff in 1846. He married Miss Louisa Hayes, the first principal of the girls' department of the Spring-street school. His successor in office, J. Lancaster Brent, was an attorney and a noted politician. He was the leader of the Rosewaters in the political faction fights of forty years ago. He went South at the breaking out of the Civil War and linked his fortunes with the Confederacy. What his subsequent fortunes or misfortunes were, deponent saith not. The fifth Superintendent was E. J. C. Kewen, an attorney, noted for his eloquence. He was the first Attorney-General of California. At the time of his appointment he had recently returned from filibustering under Wal-

ker in Central America. His military training under the "Gray-eyed Man of Destiny" was doubtless deemed by the Council an essential requisite of a Superintendent in the days when filibustering was regarded as a legitimate outlet for the military ardor of the young Angeleños.

The Rev. W. E. Boardman, a Presbyterian clergyman, succeeded Kewen, and held the office for three terms, of one year each. He was the first Superintendent to be reelected. The early Councils apparently believed in rotation in office, and gave a Superintendent but one year of honor—as to emoluments, there were none connected with the office. Of the subsequent history of Mr. Boardman, I know nothing. Having experimented in school supervision, with law, medicine and theology in about equal proportions, the Council for a time took a practical turn, probably in response to the public demand for practical education, and appointed business men to the office.

A. F. Hinchman was engaged in transportation and shipping at the time of his appointment. His successor, G. L. Mix, was an accountant, clerk, book-keeper; also County Assessor and a general utility man in the clerical line. Then, the office gravitated back to the law, and for a time it was alternately law and gospel in the schools. Then the schools had a commercial training under merchant superintendents, another concession, probably to the demand for a business education. Then the legal profession had one more trial, and that was the last.

It was not until 1869, fifteen years after the office was created, that a teacher, Dr. T. H. Rose, was elected to the position. Rose was an ex-physician. He had given up the practice of medicine and adopted teaching for a profession. He was a successful teacher. That he did not succeed as Superintendent was through no fault of his. At that time the sexes were educated separately in the higher grades of schools. Dr. Rose was principal of the boys' grammar school, and there was a lady principal of the girls' grammar school. The relations between the two principals were strained to the utmost before Dr. Rose's election, and after that event they snapped asunder. The lady principal defied his authority and refused to be supervised. An investigation of the law governing the schools revealed the fact that the office existed in name, but the incumbent had neither power nor authority to enforce his decrees. So the office died of inanition and the schools worried along for nearly three years without a Superintendent. In 1873, Dr. W. T. Lucky, a professional teacher, was appointed by the Board of Education. The succeeding Superintendents have all been selected from the educational ranks.